

RENCH CRISIS OVER DELAY ON INDEMNITY

Minister of Finance May Fail
If Peace Conference Does
Not Act Soon.

BIG TAX JUMP IS FEARED

Decision on Sum Germany
Must Pay Is Said to Await
Wilson's Approval.

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PARIS, March 15.—It is stated in reliable circles of the Peace Conference that France, Great Britain and the United States have arrived practically at a tentative agreement in regard to the amount of reparation to be exacted from Germany, which implies at the same time an approximate estimate of what Germany can pay. The publication of the facts, however, has been deferred until President Wilson has had an opportunity to pass upon the matter. The delay has created an unusually acute Ministerial crisis in France, which is likely to cause the fall of M. Klotz, the French Minister of Finance. For a week the French Parliament has been confronted with burning problems of finance. Where and how is France to get money?

Faced with a budget deficit of more than \$1,500,000,000 and the task of reconstructing the entire northern part of France, with no assurance of collecting enough from Germany even to insure the restoration of industrial life in the devastated region, the French Government has been before the Chamber of Deputies since Friday of last week pleading for time until it is able to determine how much indemnity will be obtained from the enemy in the preliminary treaty.

Klotz Placed in Dilemma.

Minister Klotz undoubtedly is aware that this sum will be small, compared with previous estimates, and with this knowledge that the initial payments at best will be meagre he is confronted with the necessity either of demanding heavy financial payments from the French taxpayers and floating a consolidated loan increasing enormously the amount of bonds issued for the national defence, or of asking further advances from the Bank of France.

As the president of the budget commission said:

"What France desires is first the establishment of her priority right to receive payment of the debts owing to the invaded provinces and to repair war damages, and second the pooling and joint liquidation by all the Allies of all other war expenditures."

"Why should we not speak out? If France had not immediately sacrificed herself to arrest the onward march of the invaders what would have become of most of the other countries? France has a right to lift up her voice; nobody can guinea it."

Three points of view have been in

conflict in the debates in the Chamber of Deputies. A considerable number of the members, notably those of the Right Centre, rely upon sufficient indemnity from Germany to meet the enormous deficit. They maintain that this is the only way that can be seen out of the financial difficulties of the country.

Others express doubt that the value of the property destroyed or damaged by Germany will be refunded in sufficient measure to enable the task of reconstruction to be begun at once. The third category claims for immediate taxation without waiting for the action of the Peace Conference.

Socialists Support Klotz.

The Socialists support the Finance Minister in his demands for taxation. France, they say, must behave as courageously in the matter of money taxation as she has been courageous toward the blood tax. Minister Klotz's project for taxing capital undoubtedly is one reason for the opposition against him, and consequently against the Clemenceau Cabinet. The Socialists applaud the Minister and go even further by demanding "the conscription of fortunes equally universal as and based upon the conscription of men."

They advocate also a revision of the markets and war profits taxes and those on the production of wealth, the perfection of the revenue laws on imports, measures against frauds and tax evasions, the nationalisation of mines and railways and the return to the State of all national sources of wealth, and their operation, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of the State.

PARIS PLOT SUSPECT TAKEN.

Bernard, Accused in Connection
With Editor's Death, Surrenders.

PARIS, March 15.—A man named Bernard, for whom the police have been looking in connection with the death of Miguel Almeredy, editor of the *Bonnet Rouge*, who died mysteriously in a Paris prison in the summer of 1917 while a prisoner charged with sedition, surrendered himself to-day. He was sent to the Sante jail.

A commission appointed to investigate the death of Almeredy reported that he had committed suicide. His widow, however, persisted that he had been murdered. An investigation of the charge resulted in a finding by the examining Magistrate that there was no evidence to support this claim.

GERMAN FLAG FALLS IN CHILE.

Interned Vessels Will Be Turned
Over to United States.

SANTIAGO, Chile, March 15.—Crews of the interned German vessels in Chilean harbors, which are to be turned over to the United States, have been ordered to lower the German flag on the ships by the Minister of War.

The German Minister here protested to the Chilean Foreign Minister against the order of the Minister of War. He was informed that the order could not be revoked because the vessels were to be ready for delivery to the United States on demand.

LOYD GEORGE HIT IN SPECIAL ELECTION

Popular Discontent Seen in
Choice of Independent
Liberal.

PREMIER WAS IGNORED

Letter of Indorsement to Op-
ponent Failed to Win
Seat.

LONDON, March 15.—Politicians look upon the result in the Parliamentary election in the West Leyton division to-day as a sharp reminder to the Coalition Government of Premier Lloyd George of popular discontent. The division returned A. E. Newbould, an Independent Liberal, who was defeated in December by a majority of 2,000 over K. F. Mason, a Coalition Unionist. In the general election in December the Coalition Unionist, Col. Wrightson, whose death made to-day's election necessary, polled 11,000 votes to Newbould's 5,000.

This result with the fact that Rear Admiral Sir W. R. Hall, Coalition Unionist, was returned for the West Derby division of Liverpool recently by a greatly decreased majority is taken to show that the political tide is turning. In the case of Admiral Hall the Coalitionists were able to argue that the result meant merely that his predecessor, Sir F. E. Smith, since appointed Lord High Chancellor, enjoyed unusual prestige and personal popularity.

The Newbould case is different. Premier Lloyd George wrote a letter approving the candidacy of Mr. Mason as a supporter of the Coalition Government. Mr. Newbould then sent a letter to the Premier pointing out that Mason had consistently voted against the Liberal policies of Lloyd George and against his social measures, whereas Newbould had always supported the policy of Lloyd George. The Premier failed to reply to the letter and the Liberals made great capital of the fact.

Politicians credit this change in sentiment to the Government's financial policy, which C. F. G. Masterman, a former member of the Cabinet, calls "The Road to Ruin."

Appropriation bills for the coming fiscal year which the Government has introduced in the House of Commons in the last few days included \$1,200,000,000 for the army, which is more than ten times the scale before the war; \$745,000,000 for the navy, which is roughly five times the rate before the war; \$325,000,000 for the service budget and \$2,475,000,000 for the civil service, the appropriation asked for the civil service being nearly two and a half times the Government's annual expenses before the war.

The army appropriations asked for by Secretary Churchill were designed to cover all possible contingencies and are susceptible of great savings, but the ordinary man fails to take that fact into account. Another cause of dissatisfaction is the continuance of conscription in a limited measure and the general impatience to get the country back to a peace footing.

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A Letter from Josef Hofmann
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